**Lesson Title: Left Behind, Mountains Ahead**

**Grade Level: 1-5**

**Lesson Overview:**

In this lesson students describe, analyze, interpret and make judgments about the artwork of John Philip Falter entitled *Left Behind, Mountains Ahead,* and engage in a variety of Language Arts, Social Studies, Math and Visual Art activities.

**Art Exemplar:**

Title**:** *Left Behind, Mountains Ahead*

Artist: John Philip Falter

Medium: oil on canvas

Date: 1980

**Objectives:**

* Students will recall previous knowledge about Nebraska pioneers and Native Americans to discuss and analyze events in this artwork.
* Students will use the events in the painting as inspiration for written expression.
* Students will utilize the vocabulary words in discussion and writing activities.
* Students will incorporate feelings and ideas generated by *Left Behind, Mountains Ahead* in various forms of writing.

**Procedure:**

**Pre-Visit teaching in the classroom**

**Theme:** Westward Expansion

**Timeline:** Createa timeline of the period of westward expansion on the Plains or use The Nebraska Adventure textbook or [www.nebraskastudies.org](http://www.nebraskastudies.org) to better understand the time period portrayed in the painting.

**Geography of the Plains area:** Using a physical map, trace the route of the pioneers heading west. Discuss the various trails and landmarks pioneers faced along the way.

**Oregon Trail:** Read one or more of the suggested reading materials to orient or introduce students to life on the Oregon Trail. A recommended book list is included in the teacher resource packet that accompanies this lesson and can also be found on the Museum of Nebraska Art website at <http://monet.unk.edu/mona/>.

**John Philip Falter**: Research information about John Falter that can be found in the teacher resource packet or at <http://monet.unk.edu/mona/>.

**Prewriting:** To build comprehension and provide background for upcoming writing activities, allow students time to create vocabulary cards from the list provided. A template for this card is provided in the teacher resource packet or on the MONA website <http://monet.unk.edu/mona/>. Discuss definitions and ask student to draw a picture to illustrate the words and the meanings. Discuss various ways to categorize all or selected vocabulary words. Have students sort words into the agreed upon categories and explain their reasons for how they sorted them.

**Teaching in the gallery:**

* Introduce the title of the exhibition: *Stories Behind the Art*. Have students look around the gallery.
* Possible discussion questions:
  1. Why is this exhibition entitled *Stories Behind the Art*?
  2. If you could give this exhibition a name, what would it be?
  3. What are some ways that pictures can tell us a story?
* Seat the group in front of the Falter painting, *Left Behind, Mountains Ahead*
* Share background information about John Philip Falter (see teacher resource packet or MONA website <http://monet.unk.edu/mona/>.)
* Referring to the Falter painting, ask:
  1. Is this title appropriate for this painting? Why or why not?
  2. What’s happening in the painting? What clues do you see to support your ideas? Notice the background for additional ideas.
  3. Where do you think this scene takes place? Why?
  4. Do you think John Falter was there? Why or why not?
  5. Who are the people in the painting?
  6. What Native American tribes lived in this area?
  7. Are there any clues about which tribe this is?
  8. What are some descriptive words to describe this painting?
  9. How does this painting make you feel? Why? (Examples are: curious, despair, sadness, courageous, disheartened, devastated, intrigued, homesick, weary, scared, fortunate).
  10. Do you think this event ever really happened? Why would the pioneers have left their things behind?
  11. How do you think the pioneers who left these items behind felt? Why?
  12. How do you think the Native American felt upon discovering these items? Why?
  13. Would you be willing to leave behind your most prized possessions?
* Continue to guide the discussion incorporating the vocabulary words.
* Generate additional words as needed to support future writing activities.

**Writing Activities** (for participation in the gallery or in the classroom)

* Have students write poems about *Left Behind, Mountains Ahead*. Suggested formats include acrostic, cinquain, diamante, or haiku and are available in the teacher resource packet or <http://monet.unk.edu/mona/>. Be sure to emphasize the traits of Ideas, Organization, and Word Choice to develop descriptive poems.
* Have students read (either alone or as a class) several literature selections focusing on a diary format. Have the children pretend they are a pioneer or Indian along the trail and write a diary entry of their experience for a day. Remind students of the gallery discussion questions about their feelings on the trail as they were forced to leave their belongings behind. Encourage students to include Voiceby adding some of the emotions the pioneers/Native Americans might have felt along the trail. Students will brainstorm a list of emotions you might feel or things you might see on the trail on a prewriting form. This form and a diary entry format are available in the teacher resource packet or <http://monet.unk.edu/mona/>.
* **Descriptive Writing**: Ask students to write a letter describing a day on the trial including geography, landmarks, weather, people, hardships, and joys. Include information from all of the senses. Have students sketch a drawing to illustrate what is said in their letter. See examples in the teacher resource packet or MONA’s website.
* **Narrative Writing:** Ask students to write a short story about the events that John Falter captures in this painting, *Left Behind, Mountains Ahead*. Be sure students write using an organized format including a beginning, middle and end. Younger students will recall a trip they once took with their family and write a story about the trip. They can illustrate their story with crayons or colored pencils.
* **Postcards:** On the back of the provided postcards of John Falter’s print, write a postcard to friends and family back home explaining why you had to leave your prized possessions behind on the trail.

**Art Activity**

1. Using the exemplar, Left Behind, Mountains Ahead, discuss the vocabulary terms for this project and point out how they are used in the painting.
   * Perspective – the visual relationship of things that are near and things that are far.
   * Horizon Line – where they sky meets the land.
   * Foreground – things found closer to the bottom of the painting.
   * Middleground – things found in the middle of the painting.
   * Background – Things found closer to the horizon line of the painting.
2. Ask these questions pertaining to the artwork.

Where is the horizon line in this artwork?

What do you find in the foreground? middleground? background?

What do things that are close to us look like?

What do things that are farther away look like?

1. Describe the concept of perspective by pointing out that the trail and river are wider in the foreground and get narrower as they move to the background.
2. With a pencil have students begin to draw a landscape by lightly drawing a horizon line on their paper. Encourage them to avoid drawing the horizon line in the middle of the paper.
3. Have students continue to lightly draw landmarks, trees, cabins, or rivers. Encourage them to add things to the foreground, middle ground and background, reminding them what objects look like the farther away they are.
4. With watercolors, have students do a light wash for the sky, land and any larger details they have added. Remind the students to lightly coat their paper first with clean water and slowly add paint.
5. Allow the paintings to dry and add details with crayons or colored pencils. Remind them again, that objects farther away have less detail.

**Conclusion:**

Have students present their written work to the classroom. Invite parents and younger students to your presentation. Display the work in the classroom or elsewhere in the school.

**Extension Activities:**

Language Arts:

* Write a script for a puppet show telling the story of life on the trails. Create stick puppets using craft sticks, construction paper, and scrap fabric. Paint a backdrop for your puppet show.
* Create a flannel board story.

Social Studies: .

* Have students research the different trails and landmarks that went through Nebraska using the outline in the teacher resource packet. Use crayons or markers to color code the trails.
* Research Native American tribes located in Nebraska. Write a paper describing their culture and how it is affected by the climate including, food, clothing, and shelter.

Science:

* Write a weather report for travelers along the trail. Use Voice and Descriptive Word Choice.
* Have students research what the Platte River was like in the 1800s and compare it to what it is like today. What resources did the river provide?

Art:

* Create an advertisement for a newspaper enticing people to settle out west. Describe the benefits they would experience and the things they might see my migrating west. Use Descriptive Word Choice.
* Have students create a postcard of their favorite work of art from the *Stories Behind the Art* Exhibition. Send to a friend or relative.

Math

* Categorize items (either save or throw out) according to how you would pack your covered wagon for a trip west. A list of items can be found in the teacher resource packet.). The unit amount representing size and weight is given with each item. Students will choose items that will equal what the covered wagon is able to hold (1000 units).

**State Standard and Curriculum Areas:**

Nebraska Language Arts/Reading: 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.3, 4.1.4, 4.1.7, 4.1.8

Nebraska Writing/Speaking: 4.3.1, 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.2.4, 4.2.5

Write Traits: Ideas and content, word choice, voice, and conventions

Nebraska Social Studies: 4.2, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7

**Assessment:**

Assessment instruments available for visual arts, language arts, and social studies   
[Rubric generators](file:///C:\Users\kindenbosch\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\QA6M0V9G\%3fhttp:\rubistar.4teachers.org)

**Resources:**

* Museum of Nebraska Art – <http://monet.unk.edu/mona>
* *Stories Behind the Art* Teacher Resource Packet.
* Dear America Series.Across the Wide and Lonesome Prairie: The Oregon Trail Diary of Hattie Campbell by Kristiana Gregory
* Lana Stickney’s diary and pioneer chest from Trails and Rails if available.
* Textbook: *The Nebraska Adventure* by Jean A. Lukesh
* Prairie life culture of pioneers living in the late 1800s (Ch. 8 *Nebraska Adventure* textbook)
* If You Traveled West in a Covered Wagon by Ellen Levine
* West By Covered Wagon: Retracing the Pioneer Trails by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent
* A Perfect Place: Joshua’s Oregon Trail Diary by Hermes, Patricia

**Materials:**

Examples of Falter’s artwork (see MONA [website](http://monet.unk.edu/mona/), curriculum poster, or exhibition),writing paper, pencils, drawing paper, crayons, colored pencils, watercolor paper or tag-board, watercolor paints, handouts from the Teacher resource packet

**Vocabulary:**

ancestor, anvil, banks, barren, barter, blacksmith, bluffs, buckskins, bureau, buttes, covered wagon, diversity, ford the river, forts, homesteader, horizon, immigrants, leather, loin cloth, mirror, moccasins, Native American, nomadic, petticoat, pioneer, prairie library, prairie schooner, predicament, portrait, Pony Express, ravine, river, ruts, sagebrush, tribe, top hat, trail, treasures, trunk, wagon train

**Art Vocabulary:**

background, foreground, horizon line, landscape, middleground, perspective, watercolor wash.

The artwork entitled *Left Behind, Mountains Ahead* is part of the exhibition entitled *Stories Behind the Art* on view at the Museum of Nebraska Art (MONA). Kearney Public Schools elementary teachers, Suzanne Morgan, Dena Harshbarger and Judy Shield from Meadowlark Elementary collaborated with Jill Wicht, MONA Director of Education at MONA to help select artworks for this exhibition and in writing the curriculum and teacher resource packet. The curriculum unit is designed with activities to fit all grade levels. Artworks were chosen for this exhibition as visual prompts for writing exercises that students of all ages can engage with.